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SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST PRESS ARTICLE

FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN WASHINGTON POST TUESDAY,
FEBRUARY 18, 1975:

QUOTE - ETHIOPIA SEEKING ARMS AID - \$25 MILLION REQUEST TO
U.S. PRESSED (BY DAVID B. OTTAWAY WASHINGTON POST FOREIGN
SERVICE)

ADDIS ABABA, FEB. 17 - THE ETHIOPIAN PROVISIONAL MILITARY
GOVERNMENT HAS MADE AN URGENT REQUEST TO THE UNITED STATES
FOR ABOUT \$25 MILLION WORTH OF AMMUNITION TO CARRY ON ITS
EXPANDING WAR AGAINST SECESSIONIST GUERRILLAS IN THE NORTH-
ERN PROVINCE OF ERITREA, ETHIOPIAN AND WESTERN DIPLOMATIC
SOURCES SAID HERE TODAY.

THE PRESSING APPEAL FOR IMMEDIATE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR
THE ERITREAN WAR SEEMS CERTAIN TO POSE A DELICATE POLICY
PROBLEM IN WASHINGTON, WHICH ALREADY HAD UNDER CONSIDERA-
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TION ANOTHER ETHIOPIAN REQUEST FOR MORE THAN \$100 MILLION

WORTH OF MODERN TANKS, AIRCRAFT AND OTHER WEAPONS.

(IN WASHINGTON, A STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN SAID: "WE HAVE

HAD CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT CONCERNING MILITARY SUPPLIES, INCLUDING A RECENT REQUEST FOR AMMUNITION. WE ARE STUDYING THIS REQUEST. NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE.")

FULFILLING THE REQUEST COULD BE THE FIRST STEP FOR THE - UNITED STATES TOWARD FAR GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN THE ETHIOPIAN CIVIL WAR, FOR MOST WESTERN OBSERVERS DO NOT SEE HOW THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT CAN CARRY ON THE FIGHTING AT ITS PRESENT LEVEL WITHOUT SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, WASHINGTON'S REFUSAL TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL AID COULD WELL RESULT IN A VICTORY FOR THE ARAB-BACKED ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT, WHICH IS SEEKING THE TOTAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE STRATEGIC RED SEA PROVINCE.

THIS WOULD MEAN THE LOSS TO ETHIOPIA OF ITS ONLY TWO PORTS AND POSSIBLY LEAD TO THE FURTHER DISINTEGRATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE, TO WHOSE UNITY THE UNITED STATES HAS LONG BEEN COMMITTED. ALSO, U.S. NAVY WARSHIPS, WHICH HAVE USED THESE PORTS PERIODICALLY FOR 20 YEARS, WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE BARRED FROM THEM IF THE MOSLEM-DOMINATED FRONT TOOK OVER THE PROVINCE.

ETHIOPIAN AND DIPLOMATIC SOURCES SAY THE EMERGENCY REQUEST WAS FIRST MADE IN GENERAL TERMS BY ETHIOPIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER, KIFLE WODAJO, IN A MEETING WITH U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY A. KISSINGER IN WASHINGTON DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF FEBRUARY, SEVERAL DAYS AFTER HEAVY FIGHTING HAD BROKEN OUT IN ERITREA.

LAST WEEK, THE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY CAME FORTH WITH A MORE PRECISE ESTIMATE OF ITS NEEDS, ASKING FOR BETWEEN \$23 MILLION AND \$26 MILLION IN AMMUNITION ALONE AND INDICATING ITS WILLINGNESS TO BUY THE SUPPLIES WITH HARD CURRENCY. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE REQUEST WAS FORWARDED BY THE AMERICAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP CHIEF, BRIG. GEN. DEAN YOW, SATURDAY TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT FOR KISSINGER'S URGENT CONSIDERATION. IT WAS UNDERSTOOD HERE THAT THE DECISION ON THE REQUEST MAY EVENTUALLY INVOLVE PRESIDENT FORD AS WELL AS THE PENTAGON AND STATE DEPARTMENT BECAUSE OF ITS FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS FOR UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN

THE ERITREAN WAR.

THE U.S. EMBASSY HERE WOULD MAKE NO COMMENT ON REPORTS OF

THE ETHIOPIAN APPEAL CIRCULATING IN THE CAPITAL TODAY
AMONG ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND WESTERN DIPLOMATS.

THE UNITED STATES HAS LONG BEEN INDIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S 13-YEAR OLD WAR AGAINST THE ERITREAN
GUERRILLAS BECAUSE IT IS ETHIOPIA'S MAIN SUPPLIER OF
ARMS AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE.

FURTHERMORE, FROM 1953 UNTIL LAST YEAR, THE UNITED STATES
MAINTAINED A LARGE COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE-GATHER-
ING FACILITY AT THE SO-CALLED KAGNEW BASE LOCATED IN AS-
MARA, THE ERITREAN PROVINCIAL CAPITAL. THERE WERE ONCE
MORE THAN 3,000 AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR
DEPENDENTS LIVING ON AND AROUND THE BASE.

BUT THE U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAS NOW PRACTICALLY CLOSED
DOWN THE KAGNEW FACILITY, WHICH IS CURRENTLY USED ONLY BY
THE NAVY FOR SHIP-TO-SHORE COMMUNICATIONS. THE AMERICAN
COMMUNITY IN ASMARA, WHICH COUNTED ABOUT 200 PERSONS BE-
FORE THE FIGHTING BEGAN JAN. 31, HAS NOW BEEN REDUCED TO
FEWER THAN A HUNDRED.

SINCE 1953, THE MAIN RATIONALE FOR AMERICAN MILITARY ASSIS-
TANCE TO ETHIOPIA WAS THE KAGNEW BASE COMMUNICATIONS FACIL-
ITY, IN RETURN FOR WHICH THE UNITED STATES EQUIPPED PRAC-
TICALLY THE ENTIRE 40,000-MAN ETHIOPIAN ARMY AS WELL AS
ITS AIR FORCE AND NAVY.

THE UNITED STATES IS CURRENTLY PROVIDING ETHIOPIA \$22.3
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MILLION IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE, OF WHICH ABOUT \$11 MILLION
CONSISTS OF SALES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING MOST
NOTABLY M-60 HEAVY TANKS, THE FIRST OF WHICH ARRIVED HERE
LAST FALL. GRANT AID TOTALS \$11.3 MILLION.

AFTER THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT EXECUTED NEARLY 60 POLITICAL
PRISONERS WITHOUT TRIAL LAST NOVEMBER, WASHINGTON ANNOUNC-
ED THAT IT WAS SUSPENDING ALL NEW MILITARY AND ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. BUT THIS DECISION DID NOT AFFECT
ONGOING PROGRAMS IN EITHER AREA.

A FEW WEEKS AGO, THE STATE DEPARTMENT LET IT BE KNOWN THAT
ASSISTANCE WAS QUIETLY BEING RESUMED, AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD
HERE THAT A \$4 MILLION GRANT FOR DROUGHT REHABILITATION
PROJECTS IS ABOUT TO BE SIGNED WITH THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERN-

MENT. IT HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN SCHEDULED FOR SIGNATURE LAST NOVEMBER.

INITIALLY, ETHIOPIA SOUGHT MORE THAN \$400 MILLION IN

MILITARY ASSISTANCE, BUT IT HAS SINCE SCALED DOWN ITS REQUESTS TO LESS THAN \$150 MILLION.

THE UNITED STATES HAS HAD THE ETHIOPIAN ARMS REQUEST "UNDER REVIEW" EVER SINCE IT WAS FIRST MADE AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO INDICATIONS THAT ANY DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE. BUT LAST FALL WASHINGTON FINALLY APPROVED THE SALE OF MORE THAN \$50 MILLION WORTH OF ARMS TO ETHIOPIA SHORTLY BEFORE THE NOVEMBER DECISION TO SUSPEND ALL NEW ASSISTANCE.

ETHIOPIA HAS SUBSTANTIAL FOREIGN RESERVES, MORE THAN \$300 MILLION AS OF NOVEMBER, BUT IT HAS BEEN EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO SPEND ANY OF THIS ON ARMS AND HAS SOUGHT INSTEAD TO OBTAIN THEM THROUGH LOANS AND CREDITS.

IN AN UNRELATED DEVELOPMENT, A MILITARY GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN REFUSED ALL COMMENT TODAY ON FOREIGN PRESS REPORTS THAT MOST, OR MANY, OF THE 700 POLITICAL PRISONERS REPORTED TO HAVE ESCAPED FROM AN ASMARA JAIL CAMP LAST FRIDAY NIGHT HAD BEEN HUNTED DOWN AND KILLED BY THE ARMY.

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(AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE REPORTED FROM KHARTOUM THAT THERE WERE REPORTS, AS YET UNCONFIRMED, THAT AN ENVOY OF THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HAD ARRIVED IN THE SUDANESE CAPITAL TO DISCUSS MEDIATION PROPOSALS.)

(REUTER QUOTED RELIABLE SOURCES IN ADDIS ABABA AS SAYING THE ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE HAS RESUMED BOMBING RAIDS ON SECESSIONIST STRONGHOLDS.)

(POWER IN ASMARA WAS REPORTEDLY RESTORED AFTER A TWO-WEEK BREAK.) MAW

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